

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4993

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, SF, IS, EG, US

SUBJECT : INTERIM AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS: THE CURRENT  
VIEW FROM ISRAEL

SUMMARY: LATEST UNEF MINI-CRISIS AND SADAT SPEECHES HAVE  
CONVINCED MOST ISRAELIS THAT EGYPT REGARDS INTERIM AGREEMENT  
NOT AS STEP TOWARD PEACE BUT MEANS FOR RECOVERING TERRITORY AND  
GAINING POLITICAL/MILITARY ADVANTAGE FOR NEXT PHASE OF STRUGGLE.  
NONETHELESS, CABINET SUPPORTED BY FIRM KNESSET MAJORITY  
REMAINS COMMITTED TO SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS.  
VIEWING NEGOTIATIONS AS US/GOI/GOE TRIANGLE, ISRAELIS REGARD  
MAINTENANCE OF CLOSE US/ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AS A MAIN  
CONSIDERATION IN CONTINUING NEGOTIATING PROCESS. U.S.  
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POSITION TOWARD PARTIES THUS IS SEEN AS OF CRITICAL

IMPORTANCE. ISRAELIS CLEARLY ARE APPRECIATIVE OF U.S. INITIATIVE RE UNGA SUSPENSION ISSUE AND REPORTS OF SUPPORT ON LATEST NEGOTIATING POSITIONS, BUT THERE IS ALSO CONCERN THAT US MIDDLE EAST POLICY MAY BE MOVING INELUCTABLY IN PRO-ARAB DIRECTION. DESPITE UNCERTAINTIES AHEAD, ISRAELIS APPEAR TO BE SELF-CONFIDENT, WITH GENERAL VIEW BEING THAT ISRAEL SHOULD NOT SURRENDER ITS ESSENTIAL SECURITY INTERESTS TO PREVENT EITHER COLLAPSE OF TALKS AND/OR SUSPENSION FROM UNGA. IN ANY CASE, NEITHER OF THESE IS REGARDED AS UNMITIGATED DISASTER. AS TO FUTURE, VIEWS ARE MIXED: SOME ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT IF NEGOTIATIONS COLLAPSE, THEY COULD BE RESUMED AT GENEVA OR IN SOME OTHER FORUM, WHILE OTHERS HOLD THAT NEXT STAGE SOONER OR LATER WOULD BE WAR IN WHICH EGYPT WOULD SUFFER DECISIVE DEFEAT. AS ISRAELIS SEE IT, BALL IS NOW VERY MUCH IN SADAT'S COURT. END SUMMARY.

1. INTERIM AGREEMENT PROSPECTS. ISRAELI EDITORS, COMMENTATORS AND POLITICIANS, UNCERTAIN ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT, GIVE IMPRESSION OF BEING UNRUFFLED. CABINET, SUPPORTED BY SOLID KNESSET MAJORITY, IS PREPARED TO PROCEED TOWARD AGREEMENT CONVINCED THAT IT HAS SHOWN MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY, THAT LATEST GOE PROPOSALS WERE UNACCEPTABLE AND THAT NEXT DEVELOPMENTS DEPEND ON US AND EGYPT. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY GOI LEADERS, PARTICULARLY PERES, IN RECENT DAYS HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY MODULATED AND NON-INFLAMMATORY, EMPHASIZING POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR ISRAEL FROM NEW AGREEMENT AND RISKS INHERENT IN NEW SETBACK.

2. ISRAELI MOOD. WHILE AWARE THAT CRITICAL DECISIONS LIE AHEAD RE INTERIM AGREEMENT AND ISRAELI PARTICIPATION IN UN, ISRAELIS APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT WITH RENEWED US AID THEY CAN COPE WITH ANY EVENTUALITY, REGARDING POSSIBILITY OF FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT AS PORTENDING MORE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR EGYPT THAN FOR ISRAEL AND SUSPENSION FROM UN AS DEVELOPMENT WHOSE IMPLICATIONS SHOULD CONCERN WESTERN WORLD MORE THAN ISRAEL. IN PART THIS MOOD DERIVES FROM VIEW THAT US/ISRAELI RELATIONS HAVE AGAIN TAKEN UPTURN, GIVEN US INITIATIVE TO DETER UNGA SUSPENSION DECISION, AND WHAT THEY REGARD AS SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI STAND ON LATEST EGYPTIAN PROPOSALS, AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT AID REQUEST WILL SOON AND POSITIVELY BE ACTED ON. MOREOVER, ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT IDF IS CONFIDENTIAL

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AT OR NEAR ITS PEAK OF PREPAREDNESS, AND THAT EGYPT WOULD BE TAKING SEVERE RISK BY REVERTING TO WAR OPTION. FINALLY, ISRAELI COOLNESS REFLECTS VIEW THAT CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ARE ONLY STAGE IN LONG-TERM PATTERN OF ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE, WITH BOTH EGYPT AND ISRAEL SEEKING POLITICAL/MILITARY ADVANTAGE FOR NEXT STAGE. IN OTHER WORDS, ISRAELIS EXPECT NEITHER MIRACULOUS TRANQUILITY IF AGREEMENT IS ATTAINED NOR POLITICAL/MILITARY DISASTER IF NEGOTIATIONS FOUNDER.

3. US/ISRAELI RELATIONS. POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS REGARD US POSITION ON NEGOTIATING ISSUES AS CRITICAL VARIABLE. THEY EMPHASIZE WHAT THEY REGARD AS TRIANGULAR NATURE OF SITUATION, WITH ISRAEL NEGOTIATING WITH US, NOT EGYPT, AND COMPETING WITH LATTER FOR US SUPPORT. MANY OBSERVERS ARE CONVINCED THAT VIRTUALLY SOLE JUSTIFICATION FOR NEGOTIATIONS IS MAINTENANCE OF US/ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP. FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, THAT RELATIONSHIP REMAINS FRAUGHT WITH AMBIGUITY. ON ONE HAND, US IS SEEN AS INDISPENSABLE LINK FOR ANY PROGRESS ON NEGOTIATING FRONT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF PERIOD OF RELATIVE STABILITY (WHETHER THREE YEARS OR LESS). RECENT USG INITIATIVES ON UN HAVE BEEN FAVORABLY RECEIVED. ON OTHER HAND, THERE IS CONCERN IN SOME QUARTERS THAT US DOMESTIC POLITICS ARE PUSHING USG IN PRO-ARAB DIRECTION AND THAT NEW US PRESSURES FOR ADDITIONAL ISRAELI CONCESSIONS MAY BE FORTHCOMING, LEADING TO NEW STRAINS. FLAP OVER HAWK MISSILES TO JORDAN HAS LEFT BITTER AFTERTASTE.

4. VIEW OF EGYPTIAN FOREIGN POLICY. EGYPT'S STANDING IN ISRAEL IS AT ITS NADIR IN AFTERMATH OF UNEF MANDATE MINI-CRISIS, SADAT'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH AND KAMPALA INITIATIVE FOR ISRAELI SUSPENSION FROM UNGA. GIVEN ALREADY DEEPLY-ROOTED SUSPICIONS RE EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS, SADAT'S REFERENCE TO ISRAEL AS DAGGER IN HEART OF ARAB WORLD HAS BEEN SEIZED ON HERE AS PROOF POSITIVE THAT EGYPT IS NOT SEEKING PROCESS OF POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION. PREVALENT VIEW IS THAT EGYPT SEES INTERIM AGREEMENT NOT AS STEP ON ROAD TO PEACE BUT AS DEVICE FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT MEANINGFUL QUID-PRO-QUO. SOME ISRAELI COMMENTATORS VIEW REPORTED GOE AGREEMENT TO THREE YEAR DURATION AS SIGNIFICANT, BUT OTHERS TEND TO DISPARAGE IT CLAIMING THAT SADAT WILL VIOLATE AGREEMENT WHENEVER HE CHOOSES. MOREOVER, AS ONE WRITER RECENTLY PUT IT, SADAT PROBABLY BELIEVES HE BENEFITS EITHER WAY, AGREEMENT

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PROVIDING HIM WITH RETURN OF EGYPTIAN TERRITORY AND FAILURE OF TALKS DRIVING DEEPER WEDGE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND US WITH CONSEQUENT DEEPENING OF ISRAELI ISOLATION. DESPITE ALL THESE RESERVATIONS RE EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS, ISRAELI LEADERS BELIEVE THAT SADAT'S REQUIREMENT TO CONCENTRATE ON INTERNAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE IMPORTANT MOTIVATION ON HIS PART FOR REACHING AGREEMENT. AS PERES TOLD TV AUDIENCE THIS WEEK, AGREEMENT WOULD BE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST WHETHER THERE IS IN EGYPT "A DIFFERENT DIRECTION, STILL CLOUDED IN DOUBT, STILL IN ITS INFANCY."

5. WHAT NEXT? ISRAELI COMMENTATORS AND POLITICIANS ARE ALMOST STOICAL ABOUT IMMEDIATE FUTURE. AS THEY HAVE SAID RECURRENTLY, ISRAEL WANTS AGREEMENT BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE. COLLAPSE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND EVEN SUSPENSION FROM UN, WHILE

NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS, ARE NOT SEEN HERE AS UNMITIGATED DISASTERS. A MODERAGE VIEW IS THAT NEGOTIATIONS PROBABLY COULD BE REVIVED AGAIN, EITHER AT GENEVA OR OTHER FORUM. HARDLINERS ALSO STILL TALK OF GENEVA, BUT TO DEMONSTRATE TO WORLD UNBRIDGEABLE GAP BETWEEN ISRAELI AND ARAB VIEWS OF PEACE. SOME ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT NEW BREAKDOWN COULD LEAD TO WAR BUT ARE CONVINCED OF IDF CAPABILITY TO DELIVER DEVASTATING BLOW TO EGYPT. THEY THEREFORE BELIEVE SADAT WILL HAVE MORE TO LOSE FROM BREAKDOWN OF TALKS THAN ISRAEL. (ISRAELIS PROFESS TO BELIEVE THAT US AND EUROPEAN OFFICIALS HIGHLY EXAGGERATE THREAT OF OIL EMBARGO IN EVENT OF ANOTHER MID-EAST WAR.) FINALLY, SOME COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT BREAKDOWN COULD MARK END OF PERIOD OF ACTIVE NEOGTIATING INITIATIVES, LEADING TO PROTRACTED STALEMATE SUCH AS FOLLOWED COLLAPSE OF JARRING TALKS. IN SUM, THE VIEW FROM ISRAEL IS THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS ON INTERIM AGREEMENT, THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE IS DESTINED TO REMAIN TENSE AND UNRESOLVED, WITH BOTH PARTIES RESERVING THEIR OPTIONS ON THE BASIC CHOICE OF WAR OR PEACE.

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